

Blinken, Soccer, and Geopolitical Codes | Aggies GO

Jonah Carlson

11/30/2022



Albania and Switzerland find themselves head-to-head in a 2003 soccer match.

Photo by "Albinfo" on Wikicommons: shorturl.at/fxFP2

Jonah Carlson - The world has united in its love of soccer – or football, however you prefer it – over the last few weeks during the FIFA World Cup. The host of this year's event, Qatar, has been the center of controversy regarding [human rights abuses](#). Franklin Foer explores the intersection between sporting and politics in [his recent Atlantic interview](#) with Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Secretary Blinken's interview can be viewed through the lens of [geopolitical codes](#). Geopolitical codes are how countries frame themselves internationally – they define which states interact and how, what interests are held, and what values are presented. Since the end of WWII, the geopolitical codes of the United States have stood upon a foundation of liberal internationalism: freedom of movement, the principles of open trade, and cooperation between nations. These cooperative principles can be seen throughout the interview: Blinken discusses bonding with Jean-Yves Le Drian, once France's minister of foreign affairs, over soccer, and later assures Foer that American values are a leading factor in engagement with Qatar. Additionally, Blinken shares a brief story about workers from China watching soccer games on a nearby pitch while constructing the new Chinese embassy. This anecdote promotes the idea of diplomacy between the U.S. and China rather than conflict, reinforcing American liberal internationalist values once more.

To understand why "American values" can serve as a genuine jumping-off point for American foreign policy, one must also understand [ideological power](#). Actors within

states, such as Secretary Blinken, are not compelled purely by traditional power interests. Instead, these actors are often driven by ideological or moral concerns that produce an additional layer of politics on which to negotiate agreements. U.S. officials are convening with Qatar on the issue of human rights not only because they observe traditional interests but out of a desire to promote American interests on an international scale.